VLR: 4-15-75 NRHP: 5-12-75 NHL: 5-16-76

Form 10-300 (Rev. 6-72) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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FOR NPS USE ONLY	
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The Maggie Walker House is a two-story, turn-of-the-century Victorian Gothic building. The façade is of pressed brick painted red and has yellow-painted stone window lintels carrying deeply incised geometric ornament. There is a Colonial Revival front porch with a tiled floor and a sun room over it, and the house is covered by a slate roof capped with iron cresting.

The plan of the house is a complex one and consists of a block fronting on the north side of East Leigh Street with a series of ever-narrowing ells behind it. A long narrow library on the west side of the main block is separated by a stair hall from a double parlor on the east. The front parlor has a rectangular projecting bay on the façade, with a single drapery cornice carrying around all three sides and integrating a gilded central pier glass. The parlors are separated by a screen of Roman Doric antae and columns, and both have tall stained-oak cabinet mantels with mirrors in the overmantel and ceramic tile fireplace surrounds. (The cabinet mantel in the front parlor is listed as Design No. 614 in the 1902 Richmond Woodworking catalog.)

Behind the front block is a second, narrower one which contains a dining room on the east and a closed-in porch on the west. There is a marblezed mantel with an elaborately cast coal grate and a pressed-tin ceiling in the dining room.

The next ell back, narrower yet, contains the kitchen, with its original stove, and another stair hall.

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All of the house's appointments survive: original wallpaper in a profusion of patterns, chandeliers in each of the first-floor rooms, curtains, and so forth. In addition, all of Mrs. Walker's personal effects--her furniture, books, and other possessions, remain in the house, disposed essentially as she left them.

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The Maggie Walker House was the home of a woman prominent in the business and charitable activities of the black community of Richmond. A founder and guiding force in many organizations, Mrs. Walker is believed to have been the first American woman bank president. Furthermore, the house with its contents offers a rare view of late-Victorian urban life.

Maggie L. Walker (1867-1934) was the daughter of a slave in the household of Elizabeth Van Lew, a prominent Union sympathizer during the War between the States. Educated at the Lancaster School and at the Armstrong Normal School, she married building contractor Armistead Walker, Jr. after she was graduated in 1883.

She soon became an agent for Women's Union Insurance and at the same time entered into the activities of the Independent Order of St. Luke, a black fraternal and cooperative insurance society. In 1902, she began publishing the St. Luke Herald. That same year, the order established the St. Luke Penny Savings Bank with Mrs. Walker as president. This bank absorbed all the other black banks in Richmond in 1929-1930 and became the Consolidated Bank and Trust Company. She served as chairman of the new institution until shortly before her death five years later.

Maggie Walker was also interested in several philanthropic endeavors among Richmond's black population. For example, she was prominent in the effort to raise money to found the Virginia Industrial School for Colored Girls, now the Janie Porter Barrett School.

Maggie Walker's efforts earned many honors for her, including an honorary degree from Virginia Union University. A high school in Richmond is named after her.

In addition to its connection with Maggie Walker, her house is an important example of late-Victorian material culture. Preserved essentially as it was when she died, with all of its furnishings intact and in place, it provides an invaluable resource for the study of black middle-class culture in early-twentieth-century America.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

